



Office of Gov. Dennis Daugaard
500 E. Capitol Ave.
Pierre, S.D. 57501
(605) 773-3212
www.state.sd.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, May 13, 2011
Contact: Tony Venhuizen or Joe Kafka, 605-773-3212

EDITORS: Please consider the following Governor's Column from First Lady Linda Daugaard:

First Lady Encourages Students To Read:

Over the past several weeks, I have been traveling to schools around the state to encourage reading. I am reading to the classes, encouraging them to read on their own, and collecting used books for other students to enjoy. As a former teacher and school librarian, I know that many students, especially boys, lose interest in reading during the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades, so I am focusing my visits on those three grades. The visits have been a great experience that I'd like to share with you.

I began the first major leg of my effort on May 8th with trips to Faith, Dupree and Eagle Butte. I have also traveled to schools in Gettysburg, Blunt, Fort Pierre, Pierre, Presho, Kennebec, Murdo, Winner, Gregory and Colome. In April, I visited schools and libraries in Sioux Falls, Dell Rapids, Rapid City, and Pierre as part of Library Week. I will be visiting more schools during the next week, going to as many as I can before summer.

The hospitality and kindness I have received during my travels has been amazing. I ate lunch with students in Presho, got a first-hand look at the beginning stages of Faith's new school, and was honored and humbled by the huge banner welcoming me to Blunt Elementary. Most importantly, I meet dozens of intelligent students everywhere I go who are eager to learn and teachers who are deeply committed to our next generation.

The response to my book drive has also been nothing short of incredible. At every school, I collect gently used books, which I deliver to the next school – so students in every school get new books to read. Students have enthusiastically demonstrated their commitment to helping others. It seems each school I visit donates increasingly more books to their fellow students!

I also really enjoy the cute things children will tell me when I visit. One student compared me to my picture on a bookmark he had been given, and told me that I looked much younger in my picture than in person. Another student told me that her grandpa was a rancher, "so he could never go anywhere." After I told the class about the Honor Flight program, which flies our veterans to Washington, D.C., to see the World War II Memorial, a student asked me why our veterans would want to go to the memorial "since they've already fought in a war once."

These trips have reinforced something I already knew, that South Dakota is a special place with great people. We all know that our children are our future. I can tell from the children I've already met that that South Dakota's future is bright!

To all the school staff, teachers, administrators and students, thank you for the great kindness you have shown me during my visits! I look forward to visiting many more schools and meeting lots more students and teachers during my time as South Dakota's First Lady.